

served at the instance of the Lord Chancellor; Scotland was excluded from the operation of the measure.

The third reading of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill was passed by the House of Commons last week, after a discussion lasting from half-past eleven on Wednesday night until five minutes past six on Thursday morning. The voting was 175 votes against 17, the Government majority being thus 158. The House of Lords carried the second reading of the Bill on Tuesday by a majority of 32.

### Book of the Week.

#### THE TANGLED SKEIN.\*

On the same lines as Froude, Baroness Orczy does not make Queen Mary nearly so black, or should one say "so red," as she is generally painted. In "The Tangled Skein," Mary is depicted as so passionately loving as to be almost lovable, a woman of strong emotions, invariably swayed by justice. It is not the common presentment.

The tangling of the skein is due to Mary's supposititious love for "Robert d'Esclade, fifth Duke of Wessex," whom the people of England desire to become King Consort. He is the embodiment of all chivalry, and every virtue dear to the heart of an Englishman. He is, so far, fancy free, but beyond deep respect for, and loyalty to, his Queen, he has no other feeling, and the idea of marriage with her merely for political reasons is repulsive to him. He is at the same time half betrothed, but not bindingly, to Lady Ursula Glynde, whom he has not seen since her babyhood. Wessex is repelled by the idea of having his wife thrust upon him in any way, and purposely avoids the girl, in which he is, unknown to himself, aided and abetted by the Queen, who tries jealously to guard him against falling a victim to Ursula's undoubted fascinations. The Lady Ursula is exceedingly beautiful, very spritely in manner, and a favourite wherever she goes. Now, as soon as she realises for what purpose Mary is keeping her in the background, Ursula's spirit is aroused to the point of self-defence. To begin with, she is in love with Wessex, the report of his nobility and goodness and the feeling that in a measure he belongs to her, have influenced her all her life; but she has also a deeper interest at stake in the fact that on her father's deathbed she bound herself by a promise to go into a convent if she should not marry Wessex. Ursula has no fancy to take the veil, so merry, so utterly independent is she that she takes to breaking bounds in order to frustrate the Queen's jealousy, and bring herself under the notice of her betrothed, which she achieves, and all would have gone well for the young couple but for the power of Cardinal de Moreno, and his tool Don Miguel, Marquis de Saurez. The Cardinal is in England

in order to negotiate the marriage between Philip of Spain and Mary. His only stumbling block he discovers to be Wessex, and with a view to clearing him out of the way he first tries to bring about the marriage between the Duke and Lady Ursula. But Mary discovers the ruse, and, in a fit of rage, declares that if this comes about his Eminence may leave England immediately; she will not marry Philip. Then the Cardinal has to set to work to part the lovers, a far more difficult and intricate business than bringing them together. It costs a life, Wessex his freedom, and Lady Ursula her good name before it can be effected. The skein is more hopelessly tangled than before, and still Mary remains obdurate. To straighten the tangle it takes the forfeiting of Mary's dignity, her love, and her will. The Cardinal's victory is gained at the expense of his own career. The lovers themselves are left with scars they can never forget.

The whole story is most ably worked out, it is prettily told, and the interest is never allowed to flag. The opening description of Molesey Fair is really excellent, giving a most realistic atmosphere at the very outset, which is well sustained throughout.

E.L.H.

### Verses.

'Tis better to speak kindly words,  
'Tis better to do kindly deeds,  
'Tis better to know  
That the seed you may sow  
Will blossom as flowers, not weeds.

'Tis better to do with a will  
The duties that come, one by one;  
'Tis better to say  
At the close of the day:  
"I have tried to leave nothing undone."

'Tis better to cultivate love,  
Contented with blessings of worth;  
'Tis better to fight  
For the cause that is right  
Than to covet the riches of earth.

'Tis better to smile, tho' the heart  
Be burdened with sorrow and pain;  
'Tis better to smile,  
For 'tis always worth while  
And we'll never pass this way again.

E. G. SNELL,  
Hon. Sec., Deaconesses' League.  
From *Wings*.

### A Word for the Week.

We cannot render benefits to those from whom we receive them, or only seldom. But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, to somebody. Beware of too much good staying in your hand.

EMERSON.

\* By Baroness Orczy. (Greening & Co.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)